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III.—*Memoir Descriptive of Prince's Island and Anno Bom, in the Bight of Biafra.* By the late Captain Boteler, R.N.

PRINCE'S ISLAND—according to Barbot, was discovered in the year 1471, either by Santarem, John de Escobar, or Fernando Po; and was named Ilha do Principe, in honour of the celebrated prince, Don Henry of Portugal. It is the smallest island, excepting Anno Bom, of the four situated in the Bight of Biafra, and does not exceed nine miles and a half in length, by six miles in breadth.

Of volcanic origin, Prince's Island presents, towards its southern extremity, a mass of steep elevations, with abrupt craggy faces, and two or three pinnacles of great height and singular appearance, resembling, as it were, gigantic nine-pins. The loftiest mountain probably exceeds four thousand feet; and, were it not for the dense clouds which seldom leave it clear, would be seen at a great distance. We have discerned it in the Cornelia, when above one hundred and thirty miles off; and even the low peaks of Fernando Po we have seen at the distance of ninety miles.

The mountainous portion of the island occupies about one-half of it, and is mostly left in a state of nature; but the remainder, though cut up by deep valleys and ravines, and studded with conical hills and acclivities, is cultivated to a degree highly creditable to the inhabitants, chiefly with coffee, of which the plantations, some time back, yielded great profits, now much reduced from competition. Provision crops constitute another staple; but the demand for them also is now much reduced, in consequence of the ill treatment which several ships have here received. And when I was on the island, the slave-trade, checked as it was, formed, I believe, the chief support of the inhabitants.

Although Prince's Island is much smaller than St. Thomas's, and has not the advantage, like that, of being the residence of the governor-general; yet its inhabitants are much the richer, and the more civilized. At St. Thomas's there is only one white gentleman, besides the governor; while at Prince's, there are, at least, five, all engaged in commercial pursuits. This is owing to the superiority of the ports of the latter, and also, in some degree, to its position nearer the main land. It was once occupied by the Dutch, who, about the end of the sixteenth century, attempted to colonize it. But their settlement was afterwards broken up by the natives, assisted by the Portuguese; and the principal fort, St. Antonio, still exhibits mementos of these ancient hostilities, during which its guns were dismounted, and

thrown over a precipice beneath, their place being now supplied by others.

There are two rainy seasons at Prince's Island, the first commencing about the 15th of April, and lasting till the 10th of June; the second continuing from the 25th of August to the 15th of November; besides which the island is subject to occasional very heavy rains even in the dry season. Tornadoes are frequent on it from half November to half May; at other times, although appearances are often threatening, they never occur. They generally blow from S.E. to N.E., and from these directions are always strongest; but sometimes, though rarely, the wind veers in them all round the compass. Their duration may be estimated at from fifteen to forty-five minutes, the former period being the most common; their fury is such, as even in this short space of time to raise a very heavy sea. Should they occur at or near full or change, they generally alter the direction of the current to W.S.W. and W.N.W.; which appears to me to confirm an idea which I have long entertained, that the currents along the west coast of Africa are caused by the winds, and promptly conform themselves to it, though at times with striking deviations, arising from remote causes, the influence of which is soon exhausted. All the currents along Prince's Island set strong, and, in the dry seasons, commonly from N.N.W. to N.N.E.

From the quantity of rain which falls on the island it is well supplied with fresh water; and as a good bank of soundings extends along its whole north or lee side, and several good ports also exist in it, supplies are easily procured. The best harbour is St. Antonio, except during the tornado season, when West Bay is safer; along the south side of the island the water is too deep, and the surf on the beach everywhere too heavy, to make approach safe or convenient.

The prevailing disease at all these islands is a bilious fever, which, although it resembles the yellow fever, is not altogether the same. Both blacks and whites suffer from it; and its effects are usually so very severe on Europeans, as to leave them constantly in danger of relapse, even when they recover from, or, at least, survive the attack, and to change them, from apparently robust and healthy men originally, to emaciated, yellow, sickly, and cadaverous objects. Yet one remarkable instance is on record of a European in St. Antonio living sixty-four years on the island, and attaining the age of eighty-four. Disease is equally prevalent throughout the whole year, except during the immediate influence of the tornadoes, of which the effect is always refreshing and salutary; but the hot season is the most pernicious to Europeans, and the cold to blacks. The usual treatment is blistering, cupping, and throwing in bark as the patient recovers.

The following are the refreshments which may be procured at Prince's Island, either for money, or by way of barter—viz. bullocks, sheep, goats, pigs, fowls, eggs, yams, cassava, pumpkins, pine-apples, bananas, plantains, sour-sops, and cocoa-nuts.

ANNO BOM—is the most southern and smallest of these islands, its length not exceeding four miles, nor its breadth two; dimensions which appear extraordinary when compared with the accounts usually given of it, some of which assign it a circumference of thirty miles. Like Prince's Island, it is mountainous, rising abruptly from an unfathomable depth to nearly three thousand feet; but its heights are rounded, like those of Fernando Po, rather than peaked and pointed like those of the other two islands, excepting where one lofty, precipitous mass rises abruptly from the adjoining mountain range, which, at its base, is about eight hundred feet high.

The peculiar appearance of this peak induced some of the officers of the *Hecla* to ascend it, which they found a task of extreme difficulty, and even danger; for, besides the great steepness of the ascent, they had carefully to examine every stone before they attempted to drag their weight up by it, or use it as a resting-place for their feet, as they were all, more or less, loose, and of compact cellular lava, though, strange to say, of a slate-like fracture, and in a state of decomposition, caused, probably, by the action of the sun after heavy rain. The summit was found to be flat, narrow, and scarcely ten yards in length; and the wind swept over it with a violence which threatened to drive the party from the place which they had gained with so much difficulty. Two low, worm-eaten crosses had been erected on it by the natives; but one was broken over, and the other threatened speedily to follow. The descent was very perilous; and, on one occasion, a rocky fragment was detached which nearly destroyed the whole party. At the foot a small lake was found, about three quarters of a mile in circumference, which, from its appearance, and the report of the natives, was judged to be of great depth; but on getting a canoe launched on it, only nine feet were found in the deepest part. The bottom was a stiff, bluish clay; and the water was very sweet, but thought by some to have a reddish tinge, which, however, could not be very decidedly pronounced.

The population of Anno Bom is about 3000 souls, chiefly collected in a large village near the north east point of the island, off which is the only tolerably safe roadstead for shipping round it. The bank of soundings is here about one-third of a mile in breadth, and sheltered from all the prevailing winds, except during the tornadoes, when the ascent is too steep to allow an anchor to drag; and the chief precaution necessary is to ride with a chain, to prevent the cable being cut. In taking up a position, the rule

is, not to anchor in less depth than seventeen fathoms, with the conical peak, already described, bearing S.S.W. $\frac{1}{2}$ W., (magnetic) when the distance from the shore will be little more than half a mile, giving room to veer to the strength of a tornado, and yet sufficient hold of the bank to avoid being driven off by the prevailing winds, which sometimes rush down from the mountains with great violence.

The chief object in visiting Anno Bom is to procure refreshments, of which the supply, however, is not so great as is usually imagined. The sheep are small and well flavoured,—goats and pigs abundant, fowls scarce, especially guinea-fowls,—fish plentiful, as also cassava, plantains, cocoa-nuts, bananas, lemons, tamarinds, sweet potatoes, guavas, and Seville oranges. Pine-apples are scarce. Water is abundant on the island, but not easily procured by shipping, on account of the heavy surf on its shores. All articles are procured more easily by barter than for money;—cheap tawdry handkerchiefs, old clothes, muskets, fish-hooks, cutlery, trinkets, rum, and tobacco, being the objects chiefly coveted; and a small quantity of the two latter is expected also as a present with every considerable bargain.

The wood in most abundance on the island resembles in appearance the cotton-tree; but is unfit for fuel on account of its spongy nature. Smaller and better wood for this purpose can be procured; but only in small quantity.

The regular winds at Anno Bom are from the south-west, excepting during the tornadoes, which occur more rarely than at Prince's Island, and only in March and September. Less rain also falls here than in the other islands, the rainy seasons being confined to April and May, October and November. The favourable accounts, however, generally given of the climate must be received, I think, with caution, not having been borne out by our own experience of it.

The natives are perfectly harmless, and have some vague idolatrous idea of the Roman Catholic religion. In their dealings with strangers they are not strictly honest, but as much so as can reasonably be expected. Their houses are small and rudely constructed of rough unhewn boards, grass, mud, and the foot-stalks of the cocoa-nut tree. They have also some small chapels of the same construction; and the king's, or governor's, house is not better than the others. (This man is a native of the island, totally independent of the Portuguese, and does not appear to have much authority;—he comes off, however, to shipping in great state, seated in a chair, with an umbrella over his head, and expects—but very seldom receives—a salute; his principal object being to obtain presents, which may thus be considered the port-dues of the place.) In various parts, between the sea and the huts,

long piles of stones are thrown up, for the protection of the inhabitants against shot from the roadstead, a precaution which the wanton conduct of the Spanish slavers has suggested; and the arrival of one of these, accordingly, for the most part, sends the inhabitants to the mountains, at least during the night, forty-six of them having been lately surprised and carried off as slaves, and eighteen deliberately massacred by one of these vessels.

Anno Bom, from its small size, distance from the coast, and bad harbour, has never risen to importance; but yet, in many respects, it seems to me more eligible for a settlement than any of the other islands on this coast. It is decidedly the driest and most healthy; and the inhabitants would receive any permanent establishment with open arms, were it merely as a protection from injuries of the above nature. It is not included among the titles of the Portuguese governor of St. Thomas's, and is entirely independent of him.

IV.—*Extracts from Observations on various Points of the West Coast of Africa, surveyed by his Majesty's Ship Ætna in 1830-32. By Captain Belcher, R.N.*

THE survey commenced at the Isles de Los, which consist of three principal islands, Factory, Crawford, and Tamara, or Footabar islands, besides several small islets or reefs, inclosing a convenient and safe anchorage for shipping. On Factory Island is a small factory which keeps up a communication with the main, the natives thus procuring English goods for rice, wax, hides, a little ivory, bullocks, goats, fowls, yams, pumpkins, cassava, bananas, limes, cola (the coffee of Soudan)*, pistachionuts, and, in the rainy season, oranges, and a few other fruits. Factory Island is well cleared of its woods, but the others only partially so. Good water is to be had on Tamara Island, and all the islands are said to be healthy, but with something, perhaps, in the atmosphere, or mode of living, which favours the formation of cataracts in the eye, many of the natives being affected with them. Vessels with much sickness on board might certainly resort hither with advantage. The thermometer at noon stands generally about 82°.

The Isles de Los are of volcanic origin, being formed chiefly of hard blue and iron-coloured lava, with occasional masses of

* The Mandingo name for this is Gourou, which they pronounce Wurru. It is astringent and bitter, and seems to contain tannin. The natives use an infusion of it, which resembles coffee; and as, when eaten raw, it removes hunger, it is carried in expeditions for this purpose. As an article of traffic it is said in some parts of the interior to be worth its weight in gold, being used by the natives whenever they can procure it.